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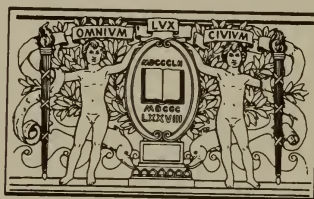


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Back Bay— Beacon Hill

Neighborhood Profile
1988



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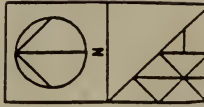
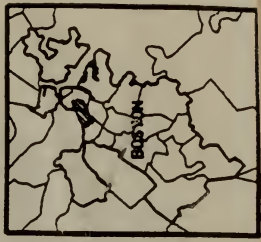
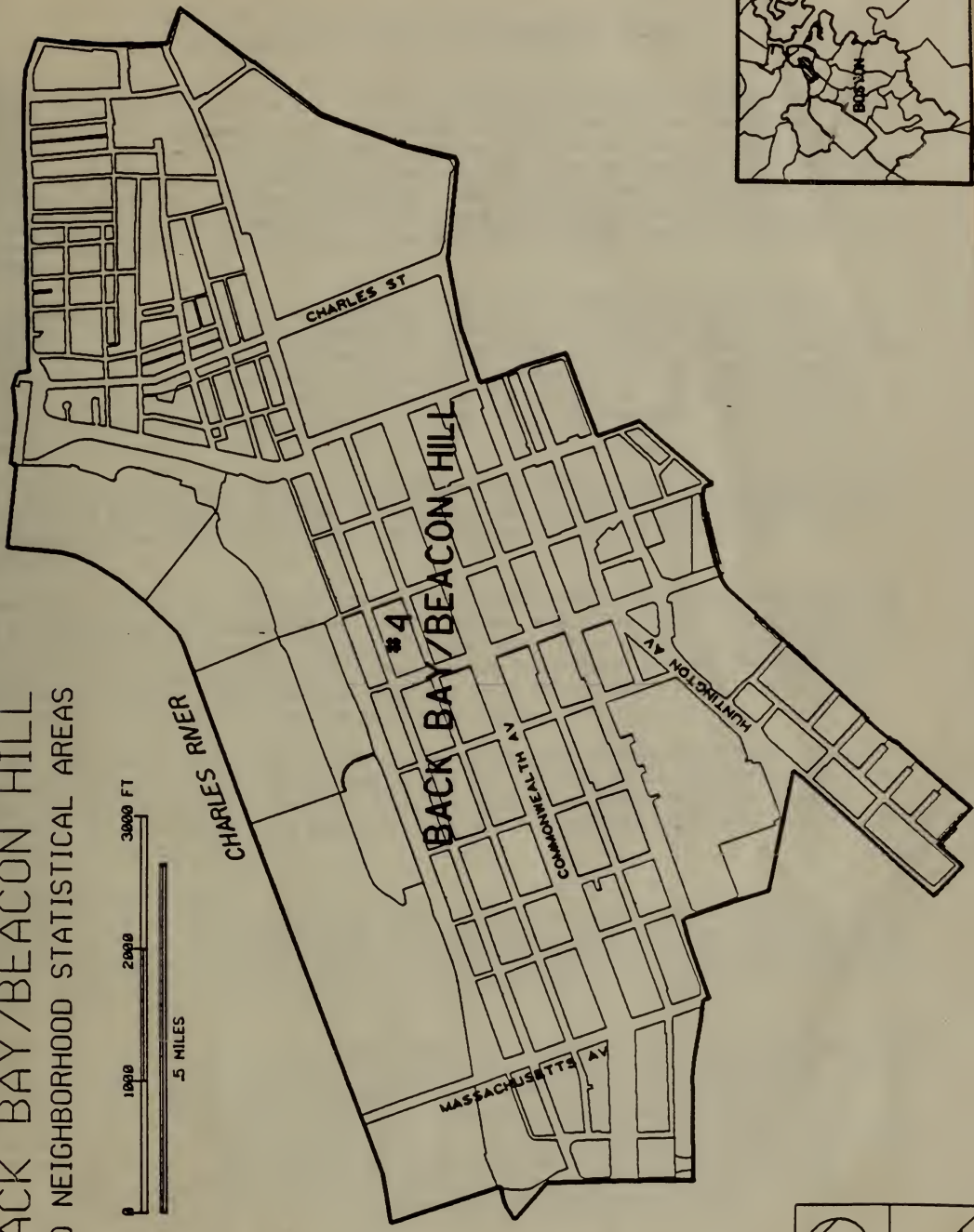
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PLANNING DISTRICT #5
BACK BAY/BEACON HILL
AND NEIGHBORHOOD STATISTICAL AREAS



BACK BAY/BEACON HILL NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE

Introductory Overview

Beacon Hill and Back Bay are two distinct neighborhoods adjoining downtown Boston. This district has experienced much revitalization and growth since the 1960s. Its 31,600 residents are about evenly split between Back Bay and Beacon Hill, and the two areas have similar demographic characteristics. Over 90 percent of the district's residents are white, with small numbers of black, Hispanic and Asian inhabitants. The increasing majority of residents are middle-aged and younger adults who are well-educated, employed in professional and managerial positions, and have relatively high incomes.

Households tend to be small, consisting of one or two workers, with few if any children. Group quarters accommodate 17 percent of the Back Bay/Beacon Hill population, because the district still contains a significant number of college students and lodging house tenants, but their numbers have diminished with the recent surge in property values and rents. Median income for the district in 1984 was 60 percent greater than the City median, while the poverty rate, at 7 percent, was the lowest in Boston.

The Beacon Hill residential area was made possible shortly after the Revolution by the levelling of three peaks when the State House was erected. The neighborhood's architecture is in the Federal and Greek Revival styles of the late 18th to mid-19th century.

Back Bay, one of the country's first planned urban areas, was created by the filling of an estuary of the Charles River. The area was a mud flat from 1821 to 1851 and considered a health menace. The plan for the upper class district was designed by Arthur Gilman. Its Victorian architecture, broad boulevards, and the Commonwealth Mall made this area quite different than the older Boston residential neighborhoods with narrow streets and general lack of open space.

Since 1960, the revitalization of Boston has profoundly affected this area. Not only have residential property values soared, but the creation of the Massachusetts Turnpike, the Prudential Center, Copley Place and new state office buildings have all sparked the development of a major new business center with many high rise buildings, hotels and parking garages.

I. Neighborhood History

Beacon Hill takes its name from its central peak where a warning beacon stood to protect the colony from Indians and foreign invaders. The Hill was originally known as Trimountain, as in Tremont Street, but after the Revolution its three peaks were cut down to make building possible and start the filling of the Boston harborfront and river banks.

The modern history of the Hill started with the building of the new State House near where the old beacon had stood. Its south slope, with its views of both the Common and the Charles River, made an ideal location for the fine homes which were in demand in prosperous, post-revolutionary Boston. A syndicate known as the Mt. Vernon Proprietors purchased some 20 acres and laid out Louisburg Square and a grid pattern of streets. They established broad setbacks on Mt. Vernon Street and imposed various deed restrictions so that only brick or stone residences could be built. Only three streets extended all the way across the Hill: Charles, Mt. Vernon, and Joy.

The north slope was set apart from the south by two long blocks on the north side of Pinckney Street, and development there took place in a less coherent pattern than the

rest of the Hill. By the end of the 18th century, the north slope had three distinct subareas: a section of stately Bulfinch houses around Bowdoin Square, a "redlight" district near the river, and the first substantial black neighborhood in Boston between Joy and Phillips streets.

Various events -- the development of the State House, the opening of the West Boston bridge across the Charles River, the establishment of Massachusetts General Hospital, the settling of the South End and Back Bay -- influenced the rise and fall of the north slope. Wooden and brick houses were built in the first half of the nineteenth century, and tenements in the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Changing land uses affected the south slope as well, but to a lesser extent. After the Civil War, the Back Bay caught the fancy of affluent old families and newly rich alike, but a hard core of old Beacon Hill families never left for the more fashionable Back Bay or the suburbs.

The Beacon Hill Civic Association, founded in 1922, rallied strong community feeling for the Hill. Private capital steadily improved property, and the concerted efforts of the BHCA secured zoning protection and resisted encroachment. Popularity and prices soared in the 1920s; prices slumped but popularity only fell off slightly in the depressed 1930s. Since World War II, as more and more young families remained or came to the Hill, values rose again, leading to the incredibly high prices for homes there today.

The Back Bay was originally a broad, shallow body of water separating Boston from Brookline, and bordering the narrow neck of land providing access to Roxbury near the present South End. Until the creation of the Public Garden, the marshes of the Back Bay reached Boston Common.

The development of the Back Bay began in 1814 when the Boston and Roxbury Mill Corporation proposed a scheme to harness its tidal flow for commercial purposes. A granite-faced mill dam completed in 1821 stretched across the Bay from Charles Street to Sewall's Point (now Kenmore Square) along present day Beacon Street. The financial success envisioned by its promoters was thwarted by steam powered manufacturing. Railroad lines built on trestles across the dammed basins in the 1830s further frustrated industrial development by impeding the flow of water in the bay.

By 1840, stagnating Back Bay waters produced such a sewage problem that city health officials demanded the area be filled. In 1852, a special state commission was appointed to prepare a development plan for the Back Bay, and by 1880 the entire area known as the Back Bay District was solid ground. By 1890, the fill extended beyond Kenmore Square and was continuing to the line where Storrow Drive is now.

The Parisian boulevards of Second Empire France very much influenced the design of the Back Bay District. Unlike earlier residential plans for Beacon Hill or the South End, the Back Bay was not divided into tree-lined squares but was conceived as a grand scheme of generously landscaped, parallel avenues.

From its inception, the Back Bay soon attracted many of the city's leading families, and the handsome townhouses and splendid mansions that began to line the streets reflected the tastes of fashionable and affluent clientele. Despite many variations in architectural style, the Back Bay was distinguished by the general consistency of character, form and scale. This was strongly encouraged by the original far-sighted deed restrictions which specified minimum building heights, generous setbacks and masonry construction.

The original restrictions against incompatible land uses, more recently replaced by zoning, protected sizeable sections against commercial encroachment. In 1966, the legislature established the Back Bay Residential District and the Back Bay Architectural Commission to exert more control over development and change.

In the mid-1960s, the construction of the Massachusetts Turnpike and the Prudential Center began the private transformation of the southern flank of the district, eliminating the extensive railroad and lumber yards in this area. Prudential Center is a private redevelopment effort by the Prudential Insurance Company which resulted in the construction of 781 new apartment units, a shopping mall of 30 stores, and over 1.6 million square feet of office space in two towers, one of which became a new 52 story landmark. The recently completed Copley Place makes an even bigger impact.

Table Ia. Population and Housing, 1950 - 1980

	1950	1960	1970	1980
Population	28,150 (3.5)	24,939 (3.6)	27,538 (4.3)	30,212 (5.4)
Housing units	9,188 (4.1)	13,111 (5.5)	15,622 (6.7)	18,192 (7.5)
Persons/unit	3.1	1.9	1.8	1.7

Note: figures in brackets are percent of Boston total.

Source: a)

See section at end of profile describing sources, as well as the methodology.

II. Demographics

In 1985, one in six Back Bay/Beacon Hill residents was living in group quarters, a percentage exceeded only in Fenway/Kenmore. The remainder lived mainly in one- and two-person households. The district, at slightly under 1.6 persons per household, had the lowest average household size, while its 37 percent of population aged between 25 and 34 years old was the highest concentration of this age group in the city.

Table IIa. Population, 1985*

	Total	Population in group quarters	Household population	Persons per household
Back Bay/Beacon Hill	31,552	6,742	24,811	1.6
City of Boston	601,095	49,595	551,500	2.4

* Note difference between total population and household population. Most of the following tables refer to household population as explained in the end notes for source b).

Table IIb. Age Composition of Household Population, 1985 (in percent)

	Median age	0-14	15-24	25-34	35-54	55+
Back Bay/Beacon Hill	28.8 yrs	5	24	37	21	13
City of Boston	28.8 yrs	17	23	22	20	18

Note: Percent may not total to 100 due to rounding.

Source: b)

The district is dominated by employed white young professionals, and there are few persons from racial or ethnic minorities.

Table IIc. Racial/Ethnic Composition of Household Population, 1985
(in percent)

	White, not Hispanic	Black	Hispanic*	Asian	Other races
Back Bay/Beacon Hill	91	4	3	2	0
City of Boston	62	25	7	5	1

Note: Percent may not total to 100 due to rounding.

* Hispanic includes self-designated Hispanics plus those who speak Spanish in the home or were born in a Spanish-speaking country

Source: b)

Less than one-fifth of the households in the district are families. One quarter are households composed of unrelated individuals and 56 percent are singles living alone.

Table IIId. Household Composition, 1985
(in percent)

	Traditional families and couples	Single parent households	Single person household	Household of unrelated individuals
Back Bay/Beacon Hill	14	5	56	25
City of Boston	36	16	34	14

Note: Percent may not total to 100 due to rounding.

Source: b)

III. Income and Poverty

In 1985, the highest median household incomes in the city were in Back Bay/Beacon Hill and the Central districts, and these also had the lowest percentage of persons in poverty.

Table IIIa. Median Household Income and Portion in Poverty, 1979 and 1984

	Median household income		Percent in poverty			
	1979	1984	1979 all persons	1984 all persons	1984 all families	1984 unrelated persons
Back Bay/Beacon Hill	\$16,042	\$32,500	17	7	13	5
City of Boston	12,530	19,250	20	21	22	17

Source: b)

IV. Mobility and Migration

With over two-thirds of its residents born elsewhere in the U.S., Canada, or Europe, alongside only 28 percent born in Massachusetts, Back Bay/Beacon Hill specializes in housing able immigrants to the city. Paralleling this pattern, 57 percent of all households had been in their 1985 dwelling less than two years, a rate of mobility exceeded only by the residents in Fenway/Kenmore.

Table IVa. Place of Birth of 1985 Residents
(in percent)

	Massachusetts	Other U.S. and Canada	Europe	Elsewhere
	-----	-----	-----	-----
Back Bay/Beacon Hill	28	61	7	4
City of Boston	55	25	5	15

Note: Percent may not total to 100 due to rounding.
Source: b)

Table IVb. Years in Dwelling Unit of 1985 Household Residents
(in percent)

	<2	2-5	6-10	11-15	16+
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Back Bay/Beacon Hill	57	20	12	5	6
City of Boston	28	27	16	10	19

Note: Percent may not total to 100 due to rounding.
Source: b)

V. Employment

Back Bay/Beacon Hill has the largest concentration of employment in Boston outside of downtown. Over 40,000 jobs are supported by finance, insurance, real estate, and business services in office buildings. Utilities, government, educational and other services provide another 50,000 jobs, and an additional 12,000 employees work in retail trades. The Back Bay, a major retail center for the region, features a variety of shops, hotels and theaters, as well as convention facilities that are now being renovated. Many of the district's employees, particularly in professional and managerial positions, also live in the neighborhood.

Back Bay/Beacon Hill's labor force participation rate of 82 percent is by far the highest in the city, while its 1 percent unemployment rate is the lowest. Among the occupations of the residents, employment in services, financial, insurance and real estate, and self-employment dominated. At the same time, given the location of the district, many of the best jobs in the city were either within walking range or accessible by MBTA.

Table Va. Labor Force Status, Spring 1985
(in percent)

	Participation rate (Persons aged 16 yrs +)	Unemployment rate
	-----	-----
Back Bay/Beacon Hill	71	1
City of Boston	66	6

Source: b)

Table Vb. Industry of Resident Workers, 1985
(in percent)

	Manuf'g	Trade	F.I.R.E.*	Services	Gov't	Other
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Back Bay/Beacon Hill	9	13	15	41	4	20
City of Boston	14	16	8	36	11	15

Note: Percent may not total to 100 due to rounding.

* F.I.R.E. is an abbreviation for Finance, Insurance and Real Estate.

Source: b)

Table Vc. Employment Located Within Neighborhood, 1983

	Manuf'g	Trade	F.I.R.E.	Services	Gov't	Other
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Back Bay/Beacon Hill	5,400	14,500	24,000	42,000	20,000*	9,300
City of Boston	48,900	81,000	78,800	171,000	91,500	58,100

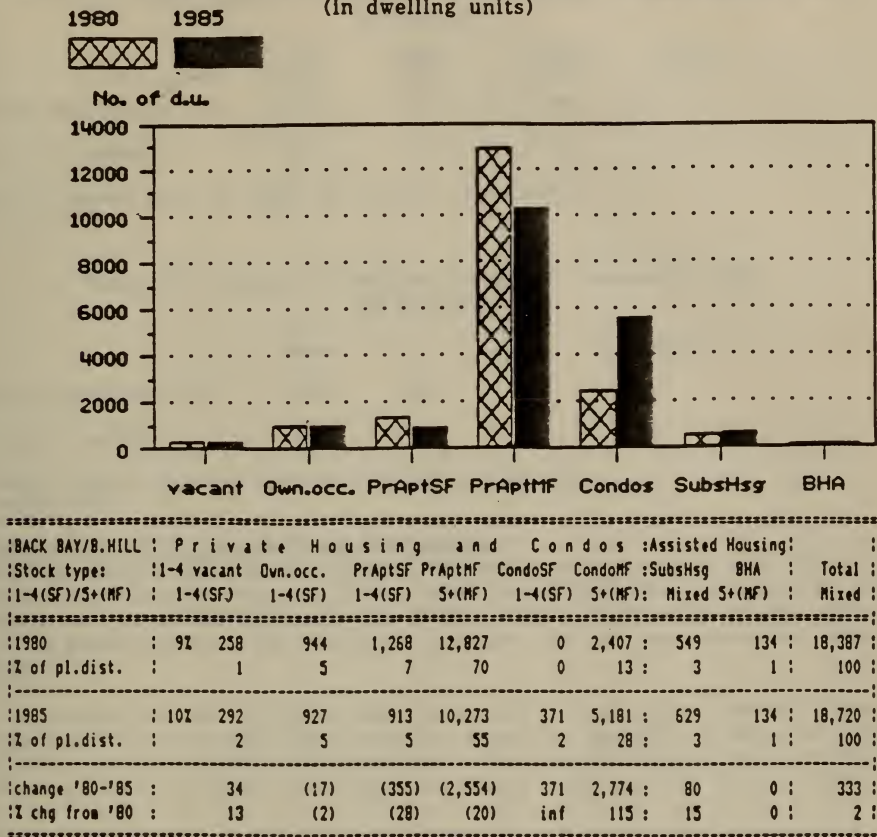
Roughly one-third of the 60,100 downtown jobs in government are estimated to be within the Back Bay/Beacon Hill district.

Source: c)

VI. Housing

The stock in Back Bay/Beacon Hill has experienced much improvement over the last 15 years. Property values are the highest in the City and average gross rents are also near the top. Most of its 18,720 housing units are in 5 unit and larger multi-family structures, with only 763 units of public or assisted housing, just 4% of the total stock in the district. Owner-occupancy rose to 20 percent in 1985, largely due to recent conversion of 2,900 private rental apartments into condominiums. By the mid-1985, its 5,550 condominiums provided 30 percent of the district's housing units and over one-fourth of Boston's total condominium stock.

Lodging houses, that used to be so plentiful in this district, have declined in number to 70, providing 1,088 rooms in 1985.

Table VIa. Housing Stock Composition by Structure Types, 1980 and 1985
(in dwelling units)

Source: c)

Table VIb. 1-3 Family Property Values and Median Gross Rents, 1980 and 1985

	1-3 family property values		Median monthly gross rents	
	1979	1985	1980	1985
Back Bay/Beacon Hill	\$140,000	\$160,000	\$327	\$590
City of Boston	32,000	115,000	254	400

Source: b)

VII. Transportation

Nearly half the residents walk to work or use bicycles, and one third use their own vehicles. Given the dominance of single persons and the location of the district, it is no surprise that 38 percent of the households do not own a vehicle, and only 9 percent own more than one.

Table VIIa. Means of Household Transportation to Work, 1985
(in percent)

	<u>Vehicle</u>	<u>MBTA</u>	<u>Walk</u>	<u>Other</u>
Back Bay/Beacon Hill	33	19	44	5
City of Boston	50	33	15	3

Note: Percent may not total to 100 due to rounding.
Source: b)

Table VIIb. Number of Vehicles Owned per Household, 1985
(in percent)

	<u>None</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3 or more</u>
Back Bay/Beacon Hill	38	53	9	0
City of Boston	39	42	14	5

Note: Percent may not total to 100 due to rounding.
Source: b)

VII. Summary of Recent and Imminent Development

The Back Bay-Beacon Hill planning district will have experienced \$1.5 B (billion) in development investment during the 1975 to 1989 period, according to source e). Office development will have been primary, with \$646.5 M (million) spent over this whole period, with pauses between the peak years to allow the new and renovated space to be absorbed.

The 5.9 M square feet (SF) of office space developed in this 15 year period breaks down into 2 M SF for the first five years, 2.3 M for the second five years, and 1.5 M for the final five year period. The major new office projects include the John Hancock Tower, Copley Place, the Ingalls Building, One Exeter Plaza and 399 Boylston Street.

The Back Bay will have accounted for 57 percent of the hotel rooms developed in Boston and 63 percent of the dollars invested in hotel development during this period. The Boston hotel industry will have invested \$425 M in the Back Bay to produce 3,118 new hotel rooms and to modernize an additional 1,328 rooms. The majority of this activity occurred between 1981 and 1985.

Investment in the Back Bay housing market has also been strong, with \$135.5 M spent developing 1,733 dwelling units (DU). These include 1,443 DU of new and adaptive reuse construction, as well as the renovation of 290 DU. The types of units that will have been developed include 401 condominiums, 667 rental units, 104 co-op apartments, a 5 room lodging house, and 560 unclassified units.

Retail investment in the Back Bay has been significant, with \$112 M developing 880,000 SF of retail space. About half of this retail investment, or 413,000 SF, came on line in 1984 with the completion of Copley Place and three other retail projects, accounting for \$68 M invested in that year.

The exhibition and convention investment in the Back Bay of \$103 M will have resulted in the development of 645,000 SF of space in the Back Bay. The major component of this investment is the \$100 M, 595,000 SF Hynes Auditorium addition and renovation at the Prudential Center which is scheduled to open in 1988.

Sources and Methodology

a) - *U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1950 - 1980*

b) - *B.R.A. and P.F.D. Household Survey, 1985*, conducted by the Center for Survey Research, U. Mass. at Boston. A sample of over 2,000 households, carefully drawn to reflect Boston's household population, was questioned in the spring of 1980, to parallel the 1980 U.S. Census. In 1985, exactly five years later, the same methodology was employed again to obtain an update and to identify neighborhood shifts. This survey did not include the group quarters population

To learn more about changes in these planning districts by 1985, the several thousand observations available from the 1985 BRA/PFD Household Survey were differentiated to the limit. Knowing such changes as the shift in number of persons by race/ethnicity and age group in each district is valuable for planning. However, this divides the available data into so many cells that it limits reliability tests. The inferences should therefore be viewed as suggestive rather than conclusive.

c) - *Boston's Changing Housing Patterns, 1970 to 1985*, Rolf Goetze, consultant to the B.R.A., November 1986. The 1980 U.S. Census does not specifically identify assisted dwelling units or the structure types within which they occur. It also does not indicate the type of stock in which condominiums are located, or when rental dwellings are in resident-owned structures. Therefore, available city data were carefully analyzed to obtain an overview and identify current housing patterns, as described in this source paper.

To aid in tracing the 1980 to 1985 changes in Table VIa, the housing stock was divided into units located in 1-4 unit structures, and those in 5 or more multi-unit structures. The 1-4s, dubbed **1-4(SF)** for single family, are largely singles, duplexes and triple-deckers, and tend to have a high rate of owner occupancy. **PrAptSF** designates the private apartments rented in this stock. In 1984, significant condominium conversion of triple-deckers commenced in some districts, shown as **CondoSF**.

Multifamily is designated as **5+(MF)**, and includes private rentals in this stock, **PrAptMF**, and condominiums, **CondoMF**, as well as public housing owned and managed by the Boston Housing Authority, **BHA**. Subsidized housing, **SubsHsg**, refers to the privately-owned developments assisted under such federal programs as Section 221(d)(3), Section 236, and Section 8, as well as state assistance programs under EOCD and MHFA. The newly built assisted housing tends to be in multifamily structures, whereas the rehabilitated stock is more likely to be in 1-4 unit stock.

Table VIa also shows how the total stock in each time period is distributed, as well as the absolute and percent change.

d) - *U.S. Bureau of the Census, "County Business Patterns," 1983*

e) - *A Summary and Survey of Development in Boston, 1975 - 1989*, John Avault and Mark Johnson, April 1987, based on compilations maintained on "ULTRALIST" by the BRA Research Department

